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ABSTRACT

"Taking the Lead: Investing in Early Childhood Leadership for the 21st Century" is a national initiative designed to build the capacity of the early care and education field to improve program quality. Taking the Lead is founded on the belief that a diverse cadre of early childhood and school-age care leaders is the key to achieving high-quality programs for children. This report looks at the work of Taking the Lead over the past 3 years. The report's first section, "Crisis in Early Care and Education--The Need for Leadership," discusses the challenge faced by Taking the Lead, its response, and the five key elements of leadership development: community partnerships, cultural/community context, relevant content, mentoring, and opportunities to exercise leadership. The remaining section describes the work of various Taking the Lead sites and offers suggestions--organized around the five key elements of leadership development--based on observations of their work. (EV)

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Taking The Lead

ED 440 740

The Many Faces of Leadership

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Taking the Lead: Investing in Early Childhood Leadership for the 21st Century is a national initiative designed to build the capacity of the early care and education field to improve program quality by:

- improving access to leadership development opportunities, building infrastructure and expanding the skills of new and existing leaders within the field to generate increased public support and public and private investment in early care and education; and
- advancing the development of director credentials for administrators/directors of early care and education programs.

Taking the Lead is founded on the belief that a diverse cadre of early childhood and school age care leaders is the key to achieving high quality programs for children. Since 1999, *Taking the Lead* has worked to expand the field's knowledge of effective and culturally relevant training practices, strengthen its approach to preparing leaders who represent the needs of all children, and bring about lasting and meaningful changes in our nation's system of child care.

Originally conceived by the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative (ECFC), the initiative is housed at the Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education at Wheelock College in partnership with other national organizations and government policy makers. The Center strives to improve the quality of early care and education by creating a viable career development system for practitioners. The Center's multifaceted research, technical assistance, training delivery, and information dissemination activities are designed to help states and localities bring about systemic and lasting change.

The Many Faces of **Leadership**

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Taking the Lead: Investing in Early Childhood Leadership for the 21st Century

The Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education at Wheelock College

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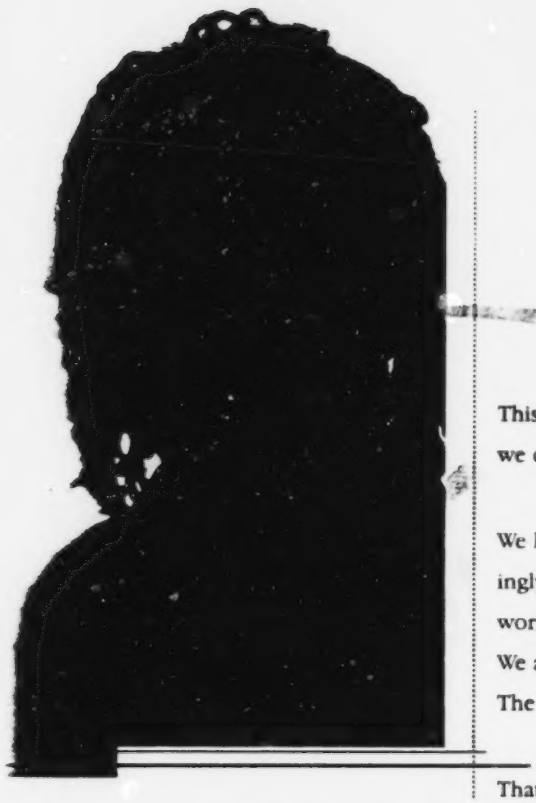

Preface

This book is about the future. We can't predict it, but we can take an active, informed role in shaping it.

We live in a world that is changing fast. Ours is an increasingly multicultural nation. More families depend on two working parents. More homes are led by single parents. We all have an increasing dependence on quality child care. The future, after all, is about our children.

That is why we took up the challenge from the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative to create new strategies to develop and support highly competent and effective leadership in early care and education for the next century. Our goal is to establish a leadership that will support and advocate effectively for quality early childhood programs for all children.

If the needs of children and families are to be authentically addressed, our leaders need to reflect the communities they serve. Children who are cared for in programs that value their heritage and encourage them to see themselves in their leaders can dream of, work for, and hold the keys to their own bright futures. Fresh thinking on how to build a strong cadre of leaders rooted in community values will support our children and open up endless possibilities for the multicultural America of the 21st century. That is why we have worked with 10 very different sites across the country to experiment with new approaches to leadership development embedded in community values.

This look at the work of *Taking the Lead* over the past three years, and implications for the next century, is presented for all of us who care about the future of America's children and the integrity and prosperity of our nation. Delve into the approaches and stories, engage in the dialogue we have begun, and let us know your responses to our perceptions and recommendations. Enjoy!

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Acknowledgments

We salute the members of the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative (ECFC) for their foresight in recognizing the need to expand and diversify the field's cadre of leaders. Each foundation in the ECFC is dedicated to realizing a vision of quality early care and education in the 21st century. We thank them all for their caring and support for young children and their families. It has been an honor to work with the members of the ECFC in managing the *Taking the Lead* Initiative.

For me, this Initiative has been about the people who have been its heart, mind, and soul. Traveling to each of the 10 *Taking the Lead* sites, meeting those doing the work, hearing their extraordinary stories, and seeing the changes in policy, practice, and lives firsthand were incredible experiences. Over the past two years, the site directors and staff, steering committees, collaborators, and participants poured their time, energy, and spirits into carrying out their sites' goals. We deeply appreciate and heartily commend all of their accomplishments. We truly believe that their tireless and ambitious efforts to train and support emerging and existing leaders and design director credentials will improve early childhood services nationwide. And, we thank all of the people from the sites who helped us in the creation of this publication.

The work of each site was considerably strengthened by additional funding and support. We acknowledge and thank each site's funding partners and collaborators for their essential contributions.

The 40 members of *Taking the Lead*'s National Panel of Advisors generously shared their time and wisdom. Their diverse experience, expertise, and perspectives in early care and education, diversity work, and leadership development provided a strong foundation for advancing *Taking the Lead*'s findings and strategies throughout the country.

Without the support of the Wheelock College community and President Marjorie Bakken, the success of *Taking the Lead*'s work would not have been possible. We value this essential contribution.

Reviewers Deborah Eaton, Julienne Johnson, Annette Unten, and Horacio Walker strengthened this publication significantly. We thank them for sharing their insights and suggestions.

There are literally scores of people to be thanked; if you are not mentioned here by name, please know that your team effort has been invaluable. Here in Boston, our work was ably assisted by a variety of consultants, including our evaluation team at the Intercultural Center for Research in Education.

Taking the Lead's administrative staff supported our director credential and leadership teams – spearheaded by *Taking the Lead* staff members Bess Emanuel and Marcia Farris – and our writing team stewarded by Kim Elliott and Eleanor Chin. Their conscientious, high-quality work and friendly faces made each hurdle passable and each day rewarding.

No words can describe my gratitude for the blessing of Andi Genser as my co-worker and supporter in this important work. Her vision, work ethic, and compassion created the fertile ground from which this initiative has grown.

Last but not least, we extend our gratitude and praise to all of the initiatives throughout the field that are working to develop and support early childhood leaders for the 21st century. Your work is vitally important, and as we carried out the work of *Taking the Lead* we were inspired by your goals, progress, and foresight.

Cecelia Alvarado, Director
Taking the Lead
Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education
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Crisis in Early Care and Education – *The Need for Leadership*

THE CHALLENGE

During the past two decades, researchers have gathered a vast array of knowledge and expertise on how the field's programs can promote positive child development.[1] Their data warns us that if our nation's current and future workforces are to thrive, working parents and participants in job training and employment programs must have access to consistent, high-quality early childhood services. All working parents need to know that their children are receiving safe, nurturing care that supports sound physical, emotional, and intellectual growth.[2]

Unfortunately, there is real cause for concern that poor-quality programs are failing to support, and are even damaging, our children. Research reveals that there is far too little good care and too much harmful care in full-day centers and family child care homes in the United States. Only 14 percent of center-based care, 12 percent of family child care, and an even lower percentage of infant care can be rated as good to excellent. The remainder is rated mediocre to poor.[3]

Program staff of all backgrounds who possess knowledge, influence, and leadership help children to value their ethnic/cultural heritage and form unbiased attitudes toward others.[4] However, people of color most frequently fill entry-level jobs in the early care and education field, with little opportunity to move into leadership roles.[5]

THE RESPONSE

In 1996, motivated by their desire to invest in the future of children and families, 17 of the country's most influential foundations and corporations joined forces to create the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative (ECFC). From 1996 to 1999, the ECFC supported *Taking the Lead*'s implementation. We, the staff members of *Taking the Lead*, planned and facilitated the work of the Initiative.

After holding nationwide, extensive discussions and focus groups with the field's leaders, the ECFC identified some core beliefs upon which *Taking the Lead* is grounded. As we carried out the work of the Initiative, we built upon and added to these beliefs:

- Most people who move into leadership in our field do so without intention, preparation, and ongoing support. There is also commonly a mismatch between the background and life experiences of program leaders and the populations they serve. This promotes the development of program policies, standards, and practices that may be inconsistent with community values and needs.
- A key to creating quality programs that can meet the needs of all children and families is leadership development. The field needs to develop a diverse cadre of knowledgeable and dedicated leaders who can mobilize public support, build consensus, represent and respond to all ethnic and linguistic communities, and strengthen the field. There is untapped potential for new and emerging leaders throughout the field. Existing leaders need high-quality training and support to realize their full potential.
- People do not have to be in supervisory, administrative, or official roles to be "leaders." All members of the field's workforce – of all heritages, income levels, and varying skill levels – can and should exercise leadership. If given the chance to build their leadership skills, these talented and caring people can contribute to defining and achieving better quality programs.
- To achieve universal quality early childhood programs, we must develop a framework of three interdependent components to guide the efforts of the entire field and any projects within it: equitable *access* to leadership development paths regardless of ability to pay, ethnicity, language, education, or geographic location; *content* that provides the knowledge and skills that leaders will need to be effective in the 21st century; and an *infrastructure* of institutions, recognition systems, regulations, and resources that can support ongoing professional development.

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In 1997, with these beliefs firmly in mind, we issued a Request for Proposals and funded 10 very different sites around the nation. Six sites focused on innovative approaches to leadership development. These sites worked to recruit and train emerging leaders in the field – people who possessed the potential to lead, but who may not have fully utilized or had access to the right opportunities, education, and resources. Four sites worked to develop and launch director credentials for their states or communities. We required all of the sites to address access, content, and infrastructure in the design, planning, and implementation of their projects. A list of all *Taking the Lead* sites and contact information for each site is included on page 40.

In our efforts to identify the key aspects of leadership development, we asked emerging and existing leaders at the sites some important questions:

- How do you define leadership?
- How have your community's concepts of leadership impacted how you have worked together to design the program?
- What support, if any, do participants need to engage in training?
- What are potential barriers to success?
- What skills and strengths do leaders most need to develop?
- What advice would you give to others who want to reach out and involve members of underrepresented groups as leaders?

"A key to creating quality programs that can meet the needs of all children and families is leadership development."

THE FIVE KEY ELEMENTS OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

As the sites' work unfolded, we identified some consistent themes. Not all leadership programs are the same, nor should they be. What succeeds in one site may not necessarily work in another. But, five key elements surfaced repeatedly in the successes of all the sites – elements that emerged from a variety of needs, cultures, and situations. These five elements appear to consistently support the kind of leadership development that can equip our 21st century leaders to be agents of change within the field and in their communities.

- **Community partnerships** – Formal and informal connections or collaborations between groups that represent the needs and interests of members of a geographic, ethnic, religious, linguistic, or professional community. Such partnerships help root and sustain the work of leadership development programs and generate opportunities to exercise leadership for participants.

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- **Cultural/community context** – History, values, traditions, expectations, economic realities, and ideals that shape participants' perspectives and actions. People define and value leadership in many ways. Effective leadership programs are designed to expect, accept, validate, and address these differences.
- **Relevant content** – Information, knowledge, and skills that prepare leaders to be effective advocates for quality early care and education. Relevant content incorporates different populations' definitions of leadership and includes information and support that prepare participants to succeed in leadership programs.
- **Mentoring** – Coaching and supporting that promotes growth and learning. Approaches include one-on-one mentor-to-protégé, one mentor with a group of protégés, peer mentoring, use of mentors from outside the field, and multitiered mentoring.
- **Opportunities to exercise leadership** – Involvement in substantive, "real life" independent or group project work that allows participants to move theory into practice and try out, refine, and expand their newly acquired knowledge and skills.

Throughout this publication, we will provide information about how these five elements supported leadership development in *Taking the Lead*. If you are an emerging or existing leader, we hope this booklet will inspire you to take steps to more fully realize your own leadership potential. If you are interested in creating a leadership development program, we hope that our suggestions will help you design a program that can truly meet the needs of those you serve.

Findings based on *The Five Key Elements of Leadership Development*

ELEMENT 1.

Community Partnerships

One of our major assumptions in designing *Taking the Lead* was that successful leadership development depends on creating a solid infrastructure. By "infrastructure," we mean permanent bridges to coordinate, link, and strengthen the efforts of the agencies and individuals within the field who so often work in isolation. To help build these bridges, we required all applicants who responded to our Request for Proposals to demonstrate the involvement of a variety of collaborators within their communities.

All 10 sites we chose involved collaborators who brought with them broad community support. So from the start, voices representing all interests participated in planning and decision making. The sites formed vital partnerships – within and outside of the field – with professional organizations, higher education institutions, businesses, philanthropic groups, social service agencies, and organizations that represented various ethnic and cultural groups throughout their communities. Based on our observations of the sites' successes, we offer the following suggestions.

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Actively involve a wide range of organizations and representatives of different populations within your community in your leadership work.

Sites that maintained their initial involvement and collaboration with partners reaped rewards at every stage of project implementation. In general, sites found that it was essential to identify and involve all the critical players in their communities in creating their programs. We observed that partnering with existing programs, rather than "reinventing the wheel," enabled sites to tap into already existing processes and talents. Although it is always important to maintain a shared, clear vision of a program's goals, we saw that involving many people in that vision can have significant benefits. The wider you cast your net, the better the chances your work has to succeed and survive, the more people you can convince, the more opportunities you can create to energize leaders and build infrastructure. Establishing community relationships can require a considerable investment of time and effort. The sites' experiences taught us that leadership development programs may need to allocate time for analysis, discussion, and inclusive planning. But all sites agreed that the return is worth the investment, and the collaborations that were established in most of the sites experienced unprecedented cooperation and success. Among other accomplishments:

- **Relationships with community collaborators helped programs connect participants to resources and opportunities to exercise leadership in the community.**

Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals
MINNESOTA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

Site Description: Twin City area participants pursued their own highly individualized leadership development paths supported by a type of peer mentoring called leadership circles. Emerging leaders were involved in a range of diverse projects designed to improve the quality of early care and education services for children and families in their communities.

Thirteen community child care-related agencies collaborated at this site. They worked an extraordinarily long time to come together as a group, and they felt it was worth it. Due to the influence of the agencies involved, the site was able to recruit 44 emerging leaders from 10 different cultural communities – Vietnamese, Egyptian, Laotian, African American, Somalian, European American, Native American, Hmong, Nigerian, Latino – that may previously have been untapped for leadership in the field. Collaboration with community partners like the Early Childhood Resource Center resulted in a six-week child care training for 34 Somali women conducted in their native language. A partnership with Project

Exceptional and the State Department of Children, Families, and Learning enabled participants to be trained to offer workshops in Spanish on working with children with disabilities. Founding Site Director Eileen Watson related, "One of our participants, Van-Anh T. Hoang, a Vietnamese woman, wanted to teach early care and education people more about cultural differences. Concordia University is one of our collaborators and we linked Van-Anh with our contacts there. She started by teaching one course in Culturally Appropriate Child Care, and Concordia eventually hired her to do more courses."

- **Community collaborators supported the creation of leadership development programs that are truly responsive to the needs of the communities and are founded in community values.**

American Indian Institute
OKLAHOMA DIRECTOR CREDENTIAL SITE

Site Description: This site created a community-based director credential program as a result of a unique collaboration between state agencies, higher education, and organizations representing Oklahoma's Native American population. The credential is offered in three graduated levels, recognized statewide, and reflective of the needs and perspectives of diverse populations.

One of the most outstanding achievements of the project was the development of a good working relationship between collaborating agencies. Initially, two letters of intent, from the American Indian Institute at the University of Oklahoma and the Early Care and Education Career Development Leaders in Oklahoma, were submitted to *Taking the Lead*. Neither mentioned the work of the other. We suggested they meet, share their ideas, and consider collaborating on a proposal. From the moment they began meeting, each expressed the transformation that began in their thinking, committee development, recruitment, and publicity for the development of the director credential. Together, they tackled – sometimes with considerable struggle as well as unity – even tougher issues of faculty development, curriculum relevancy, and involvement of the for-profit segment of the field. Site Director Ramona Wahpepah Moore reflected, "The reason we feel we were successful is that all collaborators had the same goals. We put our project first. We were very flexible. And we tried to utilize all the resources that were within our various organizations to make the project successful."

Crystal Stairs, Inc.
CALIFORNIA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

Site Description: Using a community development model, this site trained providers and parents in the City of Inglewood to build the leadership skills necessary to impact local child care policies. Recognizing the lack of a united voice for child care in their city, this project is currently working toward the establishment of a local Child Care Council.

Bringing parents and providers together at the planning and decision-making table shed light on some important needs that leaders had to address in this community. Some parents talked about the difficulty of transitioning from welfare

to work and finding affordable child care. The group came up with a couple of ideas: a directory listing all local centers and family child care homes and the services provided, and a hotline for parents to call in and learn about different centers and parent workshops. Yvonne Chavez, a Community Outreach Specialist who facilitated the Latino emerging leaders workshops, noted that while parents are an essential group to involve, contrasting opinions arose: "You're going to have differences when you bring providers and parents together in a group. You need to emphasize the importance of expressing conflicting opinions respectfully and working through disagreements."

• Partnerships with community collaborators made it easier for participants to access higher education courses.

Spanish American Union, Inc.
MASSACHUSETTS EMERGING LEADERS SITE

Site Description: A group of Spanish-speaking family child care providers was trained in their native language in leadership skills, advocacy techniques, and basic child care competencies. Their creation of the Latino Family Child Care Providers Association (LFCCPA) gave them a strong voice in their community and improved the quality of early care and education they offer to children.

In working with higher education institutions, this site was able to carve out opportunities for many participants who never thought they could take a college course. This site's work resulted in a local technical college offering a three-credit Child Growth and Development course in Spanish. And, the groundwork was laid for more courses to be offered. SAU Executive Director Maria Morales-Loebl observed, "This was a very transforming experience for many participants. For the first time, some women worked to get their GEDs. That was really important. It really helped elevate them to a place where they truly knew that they were making some contributions."

• Community collaborators helped in recruitment of participants.

Essex County College
NEW JERSEY DIRECTOR CREDENTIAL SITE*

Site Description: Essex County College developed director credential training for candidates representing a range of professional levels and cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This project's innovative instructional approaches included a combination of academic coursework, retreats, conferences, and distance learning offered in English, Spanish, and French.

Essex County College had a reputation for being "friendly" to people of diverse backgrounds and, as a result, already had a broad network of providers, directors, and teachers from underrepresented groups. To widen this existing circle, the site utilized two strategies. Flyers were mailed to nearly 100 agencies across the state, inviting directors, teachers, and family child care providers to a "Director's Forum," where practitioners offered their input regarding the content and design of the credential. Advisory Board agency members – including a social service agency serving primarily Haitian immigrants (Caribbean-Haitian Council), a large

child care center employing Latino and Portuguese providers (Las Casa de don Pedro), and a program active in the African American community (the Newark Day Care Center) – helped identify forum participants. Site Director Margarita Roig reported, "By enlisting the help of my Advisory Board partners, the forum outreach efforts were wildly successful. Over 90 people attended the first event – 30 of these participants applied for the credential program. At one point, I had over 100 people interested in filling the 16 available credential slots."

Cement connections with higher education institutions.

Higher education institutions are influential members of the early childhood community. A key part of our work depended on creating links with credit and credential programs within these institutions to establish leadership training in the field.

We required all the sites to actively pursue credit for their training programs, and they were deeply committed to partnering with higher education institutions. Each site understood how important credit, certificate, and degree opportunities are to the recruitment and retention of participants in leadership programs and the field. We observed that negotiating credit agreements takes time (six to nine months, at least) and is most easily done when members of the college faculty or administration are involved from the start. And, we found that involving higher education institutions is key to making curriculum responsive to the needs of the community.

Advancing Careers in Child Development
CALIFORNIA DIRECTOR CREDENTIAL SITE

Site Description: This site sought to link director credential coursework to the statewide licensing system and needs of directors in the field. In order to better reflect California's diversity of cultural perspectives, and incorporate the most up-to-date approaches to preparing directors for the 21st century, the site analyzed and revised the content and delivery of college/university courses concerning early childhood program administration.

Higher education was a key partner in this site's work to make director credential curriculum more responsive to issues of cultural diversity. All of the site's committees included committed, active representatives from colleges who assisted greatly in redefining college/university courses concerning early childhood program administration in a diverse society. The shared goals and efforts of the site's many partners contributed to a better working relationship between the Department of Education, the Department of Social Services, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, and the California Community College's Chancellor's Office – planting the seeds for better communication and coordination of efforts to support leaders.

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The Registry

WISCONSIN DIRECTOR CREDENTIAL SITE

Site Description: Wisconsin directors prepared for credentialing through a series of six three-credit courses and an applied project, offered in college locations across the state. Courses were offered in a range of innovative formats and schedules. The site continues to expand articulation agreements among colleges, create policies for recognizing prior learning, and refine their tracking system.

When this site first began work on a director credential in the mid-1990s, they brought together all the key players in the area. Creating courses suitable for credit became much easier because many of those who developed the curriculum worked within colleges. In 1998, the site added seven new colleges to the group offering the credential training. In the future, the site hopes to incorporate the credential into two- and four-year programs and establish links with universities offering graduate credit. Site Director Jere Wallden noted, "It was a strategic decision to have the Registry offer the credential, as opposed to one individual college. Then we could go to the colleges and say, 'No one in this area can get the state credential because you're not offering the courses.' We started getting [college] buy-in right away."

Essex County College

NEW JERSEY DIRECTOR CREDENTIAL SITE

Collaborators at this site noticed that as early care and education qualifications change, many members of the field can't see themselves getting a college degree. As a result, the site began to develop plans to have the curriculum approved and instituted in community colleges across the state. Site Director Margarita Roig reflected, "Every one of our participants who does not yet have a degree is planning on applying credential credits toward an associate's degree at Essex County College. In this project, we gave them the opportunity to see that there is something else. I see tremendous movement."

ELEMENT 2.

Cultural/ Community Context

Cultural and community values influence how leadership development programs select the content and instructors of training. These values also impact how participants evolve their own paths and styles of leadership. In observing the sites, we confirmed that successful programs are responsive to the cultural values and norms of the communities they serve.

"Cultural and community values influence how leadership development programs select the content and instructors of training."

Culturally relevant training is one of the keys to building effective leaders. A broader understanding of *why* and *how* people think and behave can help leaders develop the crucial skills of consensus-building, collaboration, and communication. Knowing your social and political history, who you are, and the traditions from which your culture developed can help build the understanding of self and community that is essential to good leadership. This training is important because leaders with these qualities can help foster the same qualities in young children. Such leaders can create programs that pay attention to the racial/cultural identity of all children and increase their potential for learning and future success. The sites' experiences lead us to offer the following advice.

Create programs that respond to different cultures' definitions of leadership and accepted characteristics in leaders.

We observed a wide range of leadership styles in various cultures at the sites. We watched sites learn about and respond to the values, traditions, and perspectives of their emerging and existing leaders. Some groups embraced a very "top-down," hierarchical approach to leadership. Others valued a more collaborative style. And we found that some cultures did not have a word for "leader" because they viewed leadership as a collective, community process. We believe that a leader should embody the ideas of a

community, but what that means can vary greatly depending on the cultural context of that community. Leadership development programs must address this reality and structure their programs accordingly. Participants engage more fully in training if a project's concept of leadership reflects their cultural values, aspirations, practices, and community needs, and if the leaders are people with whom they can identify. In all phases of *Taking the Lead* – initial recruitment, curriculum development, working to establish a director credential – each site worked to balance mainstream ideas of leadership with culture-specific norms and goals to establish its own definition of leadership.

Association of Village Council Presidents, Inc.

ALASKA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

Site Description: While maintaining important traditional values of the Native culture, this geographically remote site trained emerging leaders from 10 different Yup'ik villages to provide leadership in the Western-based cultural context of Head Start and public education programs. The use of village elders to guide the project was invaluable.

In the context of the Yup'ik culture, leaders are people who do a number of things that serve the community; they are not just good at one thing. A leader is someone who has survived adverse conditions, become enlightened, and is aware that something can be done to solve many different problems. Leadership in this cultural context is conceived of as "ellaangeq," a Yup'ik word that means "awareness." "Ellaangeq" is defined as a process, something one goes through, a spiritual journey to walk. Former Site Director Sharon Trish observed, "One of the first things the elders taught the emerging leaders – and us – was that there are lots of different forms of leadership and different roles that you play. Emerging leaders found that they are recognized as being a leader by being a parent, a good daughter, a good church member, an early childhood teacher. These are all leadership roles."

Ecumenical Child Care Network (ECCN)

MULTI-STATE EMERGING LEADERS SITE

Site Description: Drawing upon the resources of ECCN's national network, this project engaged 24 pairs of church clergy and early childhood program directors from African American church communities in the Richmond and Chicago areas. Supported by leadership training and mentors, participants worked to expand the number and quality of church-based early care and education programs.

Reverend Barbara Ingram, Mentor/Coordinator at ECCN's site in Virginia, observed that in her community African American people don't want to be "buddy buddy" with their leaders and feel more comfortable maintaining a certain level of distance. She noted, "You're put on a pedestal." ECCN Executive Director Deborah Hampton observed that leaders are the ultimate authority in community efforts. She noted that in the African American community ECCN serves, leaders are to be wise and a shining example of what is good and proper. She found that titles are extremely important. The community values leaders who have strong family values, make no compromises on these values, and share their values with their followers. Most of all, Deborah found that in order to be successful, "You need to know the community well – its values, its culture, what's important to the community."

Design leadership programs *with*, not *for*, those you seek to serve.

All the sites recognized the importance of involving program participants in charting their own paths to leadership based on their beliefs about leadership, their needs, and the needs of their communities. We found that before designing a leadership development program, it is essential to gain a holistic understanding of the people you seek to serve, to identify the issues they may need to address, and to gain the involvement of the community in shaping the program. One way to do this is to ask some critical questions up front, including:

- Where are the participants coming from personally – in terms of their own development and the realities of life in their community, their geographical location, their needs, values, race, ethnicity, language, and culture?
- Where are the participants coming from professionally – their stage of life and learning, their career goals, their previous education, training, or experiences?
- To what will they return after the program ends?
- How does each of these things influence their concept of leadership?
- What does the community want and expect from its leaders?

"Before designing a leadership development program, it is essential to gain a holistic understanding of the people you seek to serve, to identify the issues they may need to address, and gain the involvement of the community in shaping the program."

Many of the sites asked participants and the members of their communities these questions. The answers the sites received significantly influenced and strengthened the leadership programs they created.

Association of Village Council Presidents, Inc.
ALASKA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

This site's steering committee asked a panel of three village elders what direction the project should take. It was the first time many of the committee members had the opportunity to consult with the elders about problems they were having in the field, and the elders' insights were invaluable. The committee members asked the elders how emerging leaders should be prepared in order to confidently go forth and give speeches in non-Native settings like state, regional, or national meetings. The elders responded that if people know their language and culture, and they know who they are, they can go into any setting and be confident. So rather than just providing training on how to put together a slick speech, Site Director Sally Herman remembered, "We gave the emerging leaders lots of opportunities to speak at conferences, and we invited effective Native communicators who could model approaches. The important thing about public speaking [for Yup'ik people] is to talk about real things and to speak from the heart about what matters to them – the elders speak in this manner and are phenomenally powerful. We honored the fact that for Yup'ik to be effective speakers they need to be grounded in their own language and culture – to know who they are."

Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals
MINNESOTA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

The foundation of the site's work was to create opportunities for all participants to engage in activities, dialogue, and relationship building that promoted their own perceptions of leadership. This approach was summed up by Site Collaborator Sharon Henry, who highlighted the importance of asking participants questions before launching a leadership development initiative: "To get the project going, we found we should not say 'Here it is. Would you like to be a part?' We needed to ask, 'How would you build your leadership capacity? How would you improve the lives of children in early care and education? What can this project do to support you?' If people do not see their agendas being met, they will drop out."

Create programs that realistically address participants' personal, work, and financial situations.

We learned from the sites that any program focusing on leadership development needs to take into account the realities and challenges in the lives of its participants. An intensive leadership development program can require a great deal of time and affect participants' personal and professional lives. Program participants should help determine what supports they need to pursue their continuing leadership and professional development goals. Participants can also serve as experts on their communities. They can anticipate and help answer some of the questions that should be considered in designing a leadership program, including:

"Any program focusing on leadership development needs to take into account the realities and challenges in the lives of its participants."

- What obstacles exist?
- Are all members of the community able to access courses for credit?
- Where, when, and in what format are courses available?
- Are qualified trainers available?

Sites adopted different strategies to respond to participants' limitations of time, location, and family responsibilities.

Crystal Stairs, Inc.
CALIFORNIA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

This site originally recruited African Americans and Latinos from the Inglewood community. Although the Latino community responded positively to the recruitment (i.e., phone calls, flyers), the Latino child care providers and parents did not consistently attend the training. Ultimately, the steering committee realized they needed to use a different approach, to go out into the Latino community and make personal contacts. They went to school meetings, Head Start meetings, and family child care programs and spoke to providers in Spanish. Site Director

Charemon Monroe observed, "What we hadn't understood is that they needed child care and, most importantly, transportation. We had a bus pick participants up and bring them to our meetings. We had a volunteer who watched their children in the building. It worked much better."

Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals
MINNESOTA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

An Egyptian woman who wanted to open a Muslim child care center found her strong family values conflicting with the need to attend course work at night to become a child care administrator. The site located a donated computer and worked to access Internet courses so that the participant could obtain her training at home. In reflecting upon the site's attempts to respond to all of their participants' needs, Site Director Paulie Larson Deban noted, "In the beginning, we tried holding the Leadership Circles in the evenings. This got in the way of people's work and family responsibilities. Then we held them once a month on the weekends. Finally, we found that scheduling them every two months on the weekends seemed to work with people's lives better."

Find or develop trainers with the right blend of experiences, understanding, knowledge, and qualifications to be effective with all growing leaders.

All the sites struggled to find qualified instructors who had expertise in the subjects they were teaching *and* understood the backgrounds and experiences of program participants, or at least the complexities of teaching a diverse population. For example, we learned from the director credential sites' experiences that it may be necessary, but extremely difficult, to find an instructor who is an expert in quality early care and education, well-versed in financial management, available to teach in a rural location, *and* culturally competent and bilingual. We believe that a combination of direct intervention in the teacher education arena at a national policy level and work at the sites is strongly needed to alleviate this problem.

At the national level, in the fall of 1999, we began to respond to the need for trainers who understand and can effectively train the diverse early childhood student population. In collaboration with American Associate Degree Early Childhood Educators (ACCESS) and the Culturally Relevant Anti-Bias Education Center at Pacific Oaks College in California, we conducted the *National Community College Early Childhood Teaching and Leadership Institute*, a nine-day training over a nine-month period for community college instructors. Eleven teams, representing multiracial full- and part-time faculty, engaged in dialogue, built expertise, and then rewrote curriculum incorporating philosophical and practical issues of race, language, culture, and class. This groundbreaking effort, funded by the ECFC and the Pritzker Cousins Foundation, established a model curriculum for future regional faculty training institutes.

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Many of the *Taking the Lead* sites took initial steps to help meet this challenge.

Advancing Careers in Child Development
CALIFORNIA DIRECTOR CREDENTIAL SITE

Taking the Lead helped this site continue work begun by a Leadership Institute organized in November of 1996, when faculty from 13 community colleges began to analyze issues of diversity in early childhood courses. The site's Ensuring Access Committee sought to increase participation by members of underrepresented groups in training and faculty positions at the state's community colleges. Site Director Carol Sharpe noted, "We made some progress in this area by creating a master's degree cohort group program, which will consist of people from underrepresented groups. And, we recommended the creation of internship positions for our Mentor Coordinator roles that should eventually lead to faculty positions for members of underrepresented groups."

Spanish American Union, Inc.
MASSACHUSETTS EMERGING LEADERS SITE

After spending countless hours arranging for a college course to be taught in Spanish, this site discovered the class was close to being canceled because the instructor had no understanding of the work being done by the family child care providers attending the course. Intense efforts were made, a new instructor was found, and the course continued. The experience led to a general recognition of the need to find trainers with knowledge of both the participants and the course material.

American Indian Institute
OKLAHOMA DIRECTOR CREDENTIAL SITE

This site found it was important for instructors – or co-instructors – to be of the same cultural origin as the participants. If this was not possible, the site tried to assure that instructors found ways to be sensitive to cultural differences. The steering committee was so concerned about instructors' lack of understanding of cultural issues that they contracted with *Taking the Lead* to provide a two-day intensive training on diversity. Site Coordinator Charlotte Wood Wilson reflected, "In Native American culture, people allow more time to think. Instructors need to allow more 'pause' time when asking questions or delivering content. I need to remind myself as an instructor to pause – and count quietly to 10 – before I jump back in."

Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW)
MULTI-STATE EMERGING LEADERS SITE

Site Description: In five locations across the country, early childhood teachers and family child care providers participated in LEAP (Leadership Empowerment Action Project) courses. Through classroom training, resources, a support network, and a community action project, leaders were developed who could become decision-makers and advocates for excellent early care and education services.

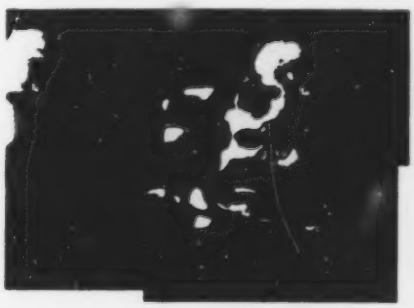
This site made a commitment to having multiracial teaching teams. Site Director Rosemarie Vardell remembered, "Some of the African American participants later told us it had been really important for them to walk into that room and to see someone who looked like them. We talked about how experiences can be different because of your race."

ELEMENT 3.

Relevant Content

In *Taking the Lead*, we discovered that the capacity for leadership can be taught and learned; leaders are not just born. But leaders have varying skills and strengths, different goals and needs, and communities define leadership in many ways. As a result, all *Taking the Lead* leadership development programs did not look alike. No single, perfect curriculum can dictate the content of leadership training. Our original Request for Proposals made the assumption that leaders in the field need training in basic leadership skills, such as public speaking and consensus building, that support success in many other professions. The sites' work supported this belief, and also revealed that other issues can be equally vital to success. Leadership development programs may need to take the following steps to ensure that participants and communities are ready to take full advantage of training:

- assess and address issues that arise as a result of participants' cultural diversity;
- gauge the need for additional training and support to build participants' self-esteem;
- develop participants' trust in leaders or trainers;
- help participants meet education goals; and
- hone participants' communication skills and a wide variety of other skills.



If we are going to develop leaders who can improve the quality of child care and lead the field in the 21st century, programs should shape their leadership training around the relevance of some key issues. The sites' progress and challenges in this area prompt the following suggestions.

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Identify the skills and support that participants need to successfully engage in training.

Participants in leadership development programs must be at a point in their personal lives, in their maturity, and in their experiences, where they are ready to take on leadership. Simply put, you can't just drop a leadership program in people's lives. Training may need to begin by supporting them in developing or maintaining the personal skills they need to become leaders. Trainers must meet participants at their level of understanding, personal growth, and skills.

Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals
MINNESOTA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

Leadership Circles reinforced the importance of building training content on the foundation of participants' personal development. Leadership Circle participants did not dwell on their personal issues, but they had time to brainstorm solutions to problems that presented barriers to their leadership development goals. Site Director Paulie Larson Deban observed, "Circles acknowledged the importance of participants' personal lives to their development as leaders. You can't separate the two. If people had personal issues that impeded their progress or got in the way, the Circles helped them resolve those problems first."

Association of Village Council Presidents, Inc.
ALASKA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

In this remote region of Alaska, drug and alcohol addiction is a strong factor in people's lives, and staying clean and sober is critical to emerging leadership. The perception is that if you're going to be a leader – to be a good person, do what you're supposed to do, take care of your kids, take care of others in your community, do the subsistence work needed to survive – you need to be healthy and it's important not to be impaired. Site Director Sally Herman reflected, "Recovered alcoholics are very effective leaders. They went through life in a difficult way, struggled to heal, and are more compassionate and wiser from their experiences. At every conference, we talked about healing and wholeness – keeping your own personal life in balance so that you can be a leader in your community."

Shape the content of training to respond to participants' backgrounds, needs, and stages of learning.

In order to provide access to leadership development opportunities for *all* early childhood professionals, we found that the content of a successful program may need to embrace multiple languages, literacy and education levels, cultural diversity, and community issues. The participants in a hypothetical leadership development program might include, in a single classroom, a teacher with a master's degree, a lead teacher with 20 years of experience but only a few child development courses, and an assistant

teacher who speaks English as a second language but is illiterate in her or his native language. The wide range of participants presented a number of challenges and solutions at all the sites. We identified some common trends from the sites' experiences:

"Individual sites worked to create leadership curriculum and training content that responded to participants' cultural diversity and varying stages of learning."

- **Speakers of languages other than English** were part of most sites' training groups. Several sites provided training in participants' native languages. In Alaska, Yup'ik translators were necessary, and in Minnesota, a group of 25 Somali women were trained by a Somali speaker. In New Jersey, materials were translated into Spanish and Haitian Creole, and in Massachusetts, college courses and training were offered in Spanish.
- **Participants' lack of a high school diploma** was an issue in many sites. In every program, there are bound to be some trainees without diplomas. If programs don't attend to this issue, the pathway may be blocked for teachers or providers who want to continue their professional development by taking college courses. The Massachusetts site offered participants a weekly pre-GED course taught in both English and Spanish. The course focused on language arts and math designed to prepare providers to move into GED courses.
- **Issues with basic skills of reading and writing** surfaced at all the sites, even for participants with high school diplomas. For example, in Alaska, participants were required to submit proposals for seed money for their action projects. Proposal reviewers found that participants needed additional training in writing skills to describe their proposed work with greater clarity and detail. In response, the site offered more training on these important skills. The New Jersey site required their participants to attend a Basic Skills Seminar before beginning other credential work.

Individual sites worked to create leadership curriculum and training content that responded to participants' cultural diversity and varying stages of learning.

Advancing Careers in Child Development

CALIFORNIA DIRECTOR CREDENTIAL SITE

From the outset, this site realized that the curriculum did not address the experiences and values of members of underrepresented groups. The site formed a Modifying Curriculum Committee to review the director permit (credential) levels of Program Director and Site Supervisor competencies section by section and evaluate the inclusion of diversity issues of race, language, culture, and class. To assure that revised curriculum would truly be reflective of directors' needs, staff brought together directors and asked them, "What didn't you receive in your classes? What did you find that you needed in the field? If you were putting together training, what would it look like?" From these efforts, staff were able to

analyze where gaps existed in the curriculum and began to create curriculum that met the needs of all students. They revised competencies to include more concepts of diversity – race, language, class, culture, and disability.

Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW)

MULTI-STATE EMERGING LEADERS SITE

The CCW site in Greensboro found that their participants had a wide range of experiences and educational backgrounds – from people who had never taken a college course to some with bachelor's degrees. Written materials were not appropriate for everyone, so they began to use more concise explanations of the topics they wanted to cover. First, they worked with the group to be sure everyone had a grasp of the general concepts, and then they went for depth. Site Director Rosemarie Vardell recalled, "The depth came from the discussions, and people drawing from their experiences. People gained incredible respect for each other, and we learned how to create common ground when differences existed."

American Indian Institute

OKLAHOMA DIRECTOR CREDENTIAL SITE

The Oklahoma site spent a lot of time finding the balance between high quality and requirements so rigorous that the system excluded people. They created a three-tiered director credential to meet the diverse needs and backgrounds of participants. Level I allows participants to take non-credit, community-based training, which does not require a high reading level. Levels II and III require much higher literacy levels and involve college-level credit courses in both child development and administration. Site Coordinator Charlotte Wood Wilson observed, "Participants have a number of options to fulfill the requirements, including coursework and experience. Literacy was a real issue for all groups of practitioners, and making the first level accessible was a strong point."

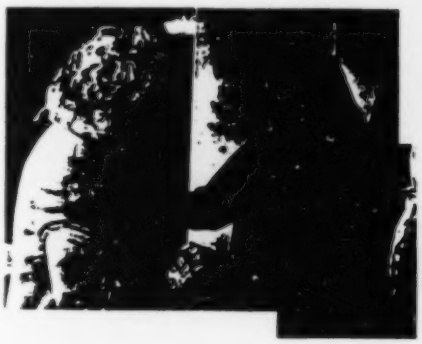
The Registry

WISCONSIN DIRECTOR CREDENTIAL SITE

The directors who underwent credential training in Wisconsin came from many backgrounds. Some had bad experiences with academics and were intimidated at the prospect of taking intensive courses. However, there were no prerequisites to training in this program. The courses were based on adult education principles – theory was mixed with practical applications and all of the courses were very interactive. Once participants found that their knowledge and experiences were valued in the classroom, they excelled – entering into discussions enthusiastically, building knowledge and self-esteem, and honing their skills. Site Director Jere Wallden noted, "Participants were hungry for more classes after they finished. They asked, 'Don't we have to renew this credential?' One 70-year-old said, 'I'm not retiring until I'm 80, so I have time to do the Infant Toddler certificate, too.' I saw people who were not active at all taking positions on State Boards, the School-Age Care Alliance, the Association for Education of Young Children."

Design training to include the same leadership skills and competencies that ensure success for leaders in any discipline.

As research shows, our field requires some fundamental changes to improve the quality of early childhood programs. To change the system, not just manage within it, our leaders must understand more than just the basic principles of early care and education. They must also be aware of and able to influence the larger issues of the profession (e.g., high turnover and difficulties in recruitment and retention). And to do this, they need to cultivate practical skills in a range of areas – public speaking, cross-cultural communication, consensus-building and collaboration, current policy and research, grant writing, media access strategies, marketing, and advocacy – that will equip them to succeed in the 21st century.



Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW)
MULTI-STATE EMERGING LEADERS SITE

This site's Leadership Empowerment Action Project (LEAP) training in five communities illustrates one way that training can be structured. Training covered definitions and different styles of leadership; coalition and alliance building across race, class, and ethnicity; principles of movement building, community organizing, and social change in a diverse society; individual and organizational change; teachers' and providers' rights in the workplace; effective communication; skills and strategies for working with the media; grassroots fundraising and grant writing; and planning, implementing, and evaluating action plans for improving child care jobs and services. The first few classes gave participants a chance to analyze their experiences in the field within a social and political context. The middle part of the course helped them place their personal experiences into a broader context – historical, social, and economic – and tackle the history of the work, social status, and compensation for child care jobs. The economics of the field, and how these economics impact quality and wages, was studied. The third component of the training helped participants analyze child care issues within this broader context and plot a strategic plan for change through an applied project. Site Director Rosemarie Vardell noted, "Both the content and the process of the LEAP course facilitated the creation of capable teachers and family child care providers."

Ecumenical Child Care Network (ECCN)
MULTI-STATE EMERGING LEADERS SITE

At the ECCN sites, training for existing and emerging leaders covered a range of leadership competencies. Training for emerging leaders included units on communication, decision-making and problem-solving, fiscal and legal management, staff management and human relations, educational programming, marketing and public relations, and leadership and advocacy. Training for existing leaders encompassed culturally relevant approaches, mentoring skills, leadership

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skills, technology, and working with the media. Chicago participant Benita Hunter commented, "The ECCN leadership competencies helped the pastor of the church where I am housed, Reverend Arthur Porter, and myself to assist parents and parishioners to focus on what the important elements of leadership must be in order to impact our community. We crafted a 'Back to School, Back to Christ' parade – an educational experience that focused on the public relations competency. This parade has become an annual affair."

Crystal Stairs, Inc.
CALIFORNIA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

The Crystal Stairs project was built on a community development training model consisting of training modules on consensus building, effective oral and written communication, resource development, data collection and research, action planning/strategy building, and mobilization. "Consensus building" surfaced repeatedly in other components, however, and the staff and participants realized that it took more than one or two sessions to gain a true understanding of group dynamics. Site Director Charemon Monroe recalled, "We discovered that understanding another person's perspective is continuous and increases as the group members continue to work together."

Make sure that your program's definition of "quality" child care is consistent with the norms of the people you train.

In observing the sites, we discovered a wide range of interpretation between the field's accepted norms of "quality care" and the values and priorities of individual families and communities. Everyone wants safe, nurturing child care that supports young children's sound physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development. But what that care looks like in different cultures can and should vary, from toilet training techniques to ways of speaking to children. Leaders who are trying to set the agenda for quality care in a community, or who are promoting definitions of quality in the field overall, must be able to grasp a community's values and understand the many faces of quality. And, the content of an effective leadership training program should be structured to promote that understanding. The goal is to train leaders to create and promote quality care that's right for their community, not to embrace a single cookie-cutter concept of quality.

Association of Village Council Presidents, Inc.
ALASKA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

Former Site Director Sharon Trish revealed one of the Alaska community's values. A Head Start review at this site mentioned that teachers did not go over the days and months of a calendar with children at morning circle time, a measure of quality in Head Start evaluations. In fact, in this remote community an important means of orienting children to the passage of time is based on practical activities – "berry picking season," "moose hunting season," etc. This method introduces survival skills and reinforces important traditions in the community. As a measure of quality care in the community, teachers at this site consider focusing on seasonal time orientation during morning circle time to be equally as important as discussing calendar time.

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American Indian Institute

OKLAHOMA DIRECTOR CREDENTIAL SITE

Native American collaborators at this site reinforced that training content needs to address community and cultural context to prepare leaders to create high-quality programs for all children. During a planning meeting, the steering committee discussed their state's cultural events and holidays. In Oklahoma, "statehood day" is observed, and all children are required to take part in celebrations. For the first time, many of the non-Native people around the table realized that "statehood day" is not a celebration for Native Americans; it is a day that commemorates when their land was taken. The significance of this kind of cultural difference in planning curriculum, and the role it plays in compromising program quality for Native American children, was clear. Dialogue and negotiating with parents who have strong feelings about the appropriateness of mainstream curriculum is very important to maintaining program quality.

Essex County College

NEW JERSEY DIRECTOR CREDENTIAL SITE

Site Director Margarita Roig took us to visit the Provision of Promise Academy, where some director credential candidates work. This early childhood program serves young African American children, some of whose home lives are chaotic and whose surrounding community is frequently rocked by violence. We learned that teachers and the parents of children in the Provision of Promise Academy feel that an important part of quality is bringing stability to children and preparing them for their academic futures. Teachers have created a model that incorporates what children can expect from elementary school. Like other preschoolers, Provision of Promise Academy students participate in circle time and engage in free choice play and art activities. Unlike many preschool programs, they also wear uniforms, sit at desks to do written work, and learn "elementary school behaviors." When Provision of Promise Academy children move on to elementary school, they excel.

ELEMENT 4.

Mentoring

Across all the sites, we saw mentoring emerge as the most commonly used leadership development strategy. Through mentoring relationships, emerging and existing leaders received the vital resources and personal support they needed to achieve their goals. Connections with mentors enabled potential leaders to prepare for and thrive in leadership development programs. While the word most often evokes the classic model of an apprentice learning from a master, we learned that mentoring can be a powerful and flexible tool that takes many different forms. We observed some exciting and effective approaches to mentoring in action. An in-depth account of these findings can be found in *Taking the Lead*'s publication *The Power of Mentoring*. Four key themes emerged from the mentoring efforts of all the sites:

- Community and cultural context influence the format and style of mentoring.
- Mentoring equally supports individual professional and personal growth.
- Effective mentoring provides learning opportunities and benefits for both the mentor and the protégé.
- There are many different effective mentoring approaches, which can be used on their own or in different combinations.

This last theme provided us with some fresh perspectives about the strengths of five different kinds of mentoring, as the following examples reveal.

One-on-one mentor and protégé: Mentoring that usually pairs an expert or more experienced person holding a position of more responsibility with a protégé wanting to improve his or her professional expertise.

Advancing Careers in Child Development
CALIFORNIA DIRECTOR CREDENTIAL SITE

Although the Director Mentor Program in California was not supported by ***Taking the Lead***, its work is closely allied to the site's director credential work. This program, the result of a pre-existing collaboration between the California Early Childhood Mentor Program (CECMP), 62 community colleges, and the California Department of Education, is a good example of a one-on-one mentor and protégé approach. Experienced directors (Director Mentors) undergo a rigorous training and screening process. Local Director Mentor Selection Committees, composed of early care and education professionals and parents and overseen by CECMP-hired Mentor Coordinators, review candidates' written applications, references, and transcripts, and visit their programs. Novice Directors (protégés) and Director Mentors sign contracts that specify the means of communication and contact and establish short-term objectives. Director Mentors are paid $500 for a minimum of 20 hours of contact time (e.g., oral and written communication, meetings, visits by mentors to proteges' work sites). *Taking the Lead* Site Director Carol Sharpe noted, "Involving parents in the Director Mentor Selection Committees means that programs have a better chance of improving their quality. Parents might pick up on the communication between teachers and children, the ambiance of the classroom, and the existence or lack of cultural relevance and sensitivity."

One mentor to many protégés: Usually seen in a committee format, an expert is assigned to mentor a group working toward a common goal. Another member of the group assumes the facilitation role, while the mentor provides information and support.

Spanish American Union, Inc.
MASSACHUSETTS EMERGING LEADERS SITE

Emerging leaders formed committees (e.g., parents, children's advocacy, professional development) to aid them in their collective work to create a Latino Family Child Care Providers Association. When the site began its work, they planned to have existing leaders meet quarterly to mentor and support emerging leaders. Instead, existing leaders came to the monthly meetings of emerging leaders. This resulted in more help and information, but too much time in meetings. In response, each existing leader chose one committee to mentor. The mentors to the committees viewed themselves not as experts, but as both teachers and learners. They acted as resource people, but they were also colleagues to the groups they mentored. Their core mission was to work shoulder to shoulder with members of the committees to build a stronger association and to facilitate the development of the women they worked with – promoting leadership skills, decision-making skills, communication skills, and problem-solving skills. Site Director Moraima Mendoza reflected, "Why not one-on-one mentoring? These participants wanted to be in a group and exchange ideas. They're so isolated in their work. They needed to be together. Also, one-on-one mentoring would be hard because it's difficult to find mentors that can commit."

Peer mentoring: May involve one or more persons who see themselves as peers in a profession sharing what they know and are learning, solving mutual problems, and providing support to each other in a formal or informal setting.

Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals
MINNESOTA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

This site used the Leadership Circles process – peer groups of 7 to 10 people with a rotating facilitator – to mentor emerging leaders. Leadership Circles are founded on the premise that development begins with the individual and fellow learners are true experts in their own right. In Leadership Circles, people come together to talk about their goals for building their leadership capacity and how they want to improve the lives of children. The Circles serve as a forum and sounding board for participants. During each monthly meeting of the site's Leadership Circles, all participants were given 20 minutes to talk about their goals and challenges. They received highly focused feedback, questions, and links to resources rather than specific advice from their fellow circle peers. Participants felt that the Circles provided an essential "push" that helped them clearly define and pursue their goals. People said what they felt, the trust level was high, and respect for each other's differences was a shared value.

Mentors from outside the field: When choosing mentors, protégés sometimes look for individuals with skills and experience that are not necessarily from the profession in which they are working. Deciding factors may be language, culture, class, or race, or the need to grow in a particular skill area best mentored by a person outside the respective field.

Association of Village Council Presidents, Inc.
ALASKA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

Because of the lack of early childhood practitioners in this remote area, the site's steering committee suspected that participants would find mentors from both within and outside the field. The emerging leaders chose mentors from many different walks of life – public school teachers, technical college instructors, substance abuse counselors, Native and non-Native. All the mentors were respected for their hard work, values, commitment to quality care for young children, and attentiveness to the wisdom of village elders, who were a guiding force at this site. Opening up the mentoring process to the elders, and making it possible for them to help ground leadership development in traditional Yup'ik values, meant that emerging leaders gained skills ***and*** oriented their development to be responsive to the needs of their own community. Mentoring provided the flexible leadership development model that allowed emerging leaders to find pathways to leadership in both worlds. They learned to "walk in two worlds with one Spirit." Meanwhile, white early care and education professionals in Bethel, Alaska were powerfully influenced by emerging leaders' connection to traditional ways, learning for the first time themselves how to be bicultural and "walk in two worlds."

Multitiered mentoring: As seen in the sites, a director provides support, guidance, and resources to a coordinator. The coordinator provides training and support to community-based mentors who then are assigned several protégés each to offer similar training and support. In the approach utilized in ECCN's Virginia site, the second layer of mentors also provided support to each other.

Ecumenical Child Care Network (ECCN)

MULTI-STATE EMERGING LEADERS SITE

In this site's unique multitiered mentoring structure, ECCN Director Deborah Hampton mentored Mentor/Coordinator Jessica Flowers and Jessica mentored three Mentor/Coordinators. Each Mentor/Coordinator served as a contact between ECCN and teams of pastors and directors of church-based early childhood programs. They met with participants, guided their projects, helped to lead quarterly meetings, and more. To add even richer layers to this structure, the Mentor/Coordinators formed tight peer mentoring relationships in which they exchanged knowledge, shared resources, and problem-solved together. Originally, this site planned for Jessica, a long-time member of ECCN, to serve as a single mentor/advisor to the teams from 16 different churches in Virginia that were starting new child care programs or reshaping existing programs. Very quickly, however, three members of the community emerged as strong, existing leaders who became Mentor/Coordinators for the church teams in their areas. This multitiered system of mentoring meant that there were many more resources available. Jessica explained, "There were lots of levels and types of relationships. Nobody was territorial. Everyone was in it for a higher good. The spiritual dimension was key to our success. We were invested in, and living out the calling of, the project. We were putting the project first and ourselves second."

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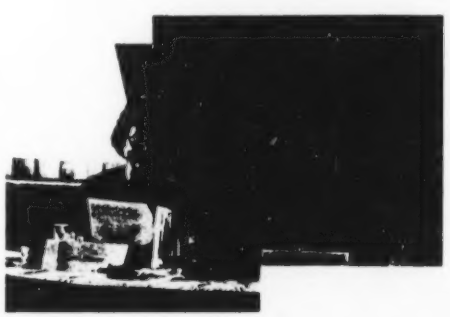
ELEMENT 5.

Opportunities to Exercise Leadership

Leadership development is not a finite event; it is an ongoing process. The sites taught us that leaders need opportunities to exercise what they are learning and continue to develop. As in most fields, the best way to help early childhood professionals understand the theoretical principles of leadership is to help them put their ideas into action. We found that one of the most successful ways to challenge emerging *and* existing leaders to stretch was to require that they implement a substantive project. Concrete opportunities to exercise leadership can serve as real-life learning laboratories in which participants move theory into practice, try out new skills, and define their preferred leadership styles. Site directors and participants alike viewed opportunities for participants to test their wings, exercise leadership, and maintain attitudes of continuing growth as a beneficial and vitally important part of their programs. Based on sites' and participants' achievements in this area, we offer the following suggestions.

Encourage emerging and existing leaders to turn theory into practice.

We found that project work – conducted by emerging or existing leaders, individually or in groups – benefited both communities and participants. Projects challenged leaders to exercise new skills and test the validity of their assumptions. Participants reported that opportunities to design and implement projects that impacted their communities, as well as chances to serve on committees and governing boards, were some of the most effective and rewarding elements of their training. And, some of the most successful projects positively impacted the quality of early care and education at the sites.



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The Registry

WISCONSIN DIRECTOR CREDENTIAL SITE

At the end of the six courses required for the Wisconsin Administrator's Credential, participants synthesized their learning into one applied project. Before they could embark on the project, they had to develop a plan that demonstrated how they had, or would, use all the components of their training. Participants had to identify the key partners needed to support and contribute to their effort. And, they had to assess the short- and long-term financial implications of their projects. Site Director Jere Wallden recalled, "One director dreamed of creating a 'fitness center' for the kids in her center. She began with a full feasibility study, and then she approached her YMCA to gain permission to proceed. She generated so much excitement about this that she was able to get a manufacturing company to design and donate preschool stationary exercise cycles!' It looks like she's gotten the funding to really do it."

Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW)

MULTI-STATE EMERGING LEADERS SITE

At one CCW site, a family child care provider from Nigeria found new strengths through course and project work. She had never been part of a group where people talked about issues and were genuinely interested in hearing others' opinions. She was new to speaking up in a group, and at first she felt self-conscious about her accent. However, when she had to give a two-minute presentation to the class, she was amazed at the positive feedback she received. When an opportunity arose for someone to go to the National Organizer's Alliance conference, she leapt to the challenge. Her class had not yet covered fundraising, so she signed up for extra fundraising training and shared the information with the group. When it came time for the applied project, she and a couple of other family child care providers decided to design a family child care accreditation project so that providers would be eligible for higher reimbursement rates. With two other providers, she presented at association meetings to recruit providers, applied for seed money from the project, and even went to one of the local child care resource and referral agencies and asked them for money – and got it. Site Director Rosemarie Vardell noted, "She's one of the providers who is trying to go through the accreditation process herself. [Before LEAP] I'm sure that she wouldn't have gone that route."

Ecumenical Child Care Network (ECCN)

MULTI-STATE EMERGING LEADERS SITE

Staff development was the main focus of Mentor/Coordinator Reverend Gail Sailes's and Mentor/Coordinator Reverend Barbara Ingram's project. After participating in ECCN training, their staff wanted to share the information with other church-based programs. Gail and Barbara planned a large conference for Christian early care and education programs in their area. Over 50 teachers and directors attended this successful event, which offered early childhood topics from a Christian perspective and other more traditional topics such as play-based learning. Gail and Barbara were encouraged to plan another event. Gail reflected, "Summer camp was coming up so we decided we needed to get together again to share some ideas – to have a brainstorming session. Thirteen of us came together. There was such a wealth of information, handouts, and suggestions. It was awesome the kinds of things we were learning from each other."

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Crystal Stairs, Inc.

CALIFORNIA EMERGING LEADERS SITE

Early on, this site's emerging leaders group decided that the best way to solve the child care problems they were discovering in the City of Inglewood was to create a Child Care Council. Despite the long-term plan for creating a Council, the process seemed to stall and people's interest was dying. They felt like they were just talking, not doing anything, and really needed to shift into action. In response, Site Director Charemon Monroe brought a speaker in who was the Child Care Coordinator for the city of L.A. The speaker helped the emerging leaders understand the challenges they were going to face, tune into who the key players were, find out who they would need to address, and identify the advocacy tools they would need. After this meeting, the group realized that they needed to develop a mission statement and a position paper to explain who they were and what they were all about. After several heated discussions and three drafts, the statement was completed. Charemon noted, "At that point, we hadn't yet gotten to our 'mobilization' component, which focused on advocacy in the community. However, to get the group moving, we scheduled visits with Inglewood city council representatives. The emerging leaders presented their mission statement and asked the representatives, 'What do we need to do to make a Child Care Council part of the Inglewood city infrastructure?' This really got them motivated. They were doing something, they had a purpose, and they were validating themselves."

Foster leaders' continuing growth through teamwork.

Emerging and existing leaders do not exist in a void. Leaders can continue to expand their function, their skills, and their energy when they are part of a group, not just when they are leading a group. Several sites found that creating a learning atmosphere in which the collective energy and power of group work was valued enriched their leadership development work.

Essex County College

NEW JERSEY DIRECTOR CREDENTIAL SITE

Many of this site's directors didn't see themselves as leaders prior to their participation in the project. In a leadership course, the class talked about what it means to be a leader – you don't just represent "your race," you represent "issues." Participants began to see how important it was for them to take a more active role for their staff, for the parents of the children in their programs, and for their community. To help parents see what was happening to education in their community they began, as a group, to hold forums on the new legislation that was mandating programs for 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds in the public schools. Site Director Margarita Roig noted, "They invited the person who wrote the research that they used in the legislation. They invited the lawmakers. They brought in all sorts of directors and parents to hear these people and discuss this new legislation. It was incredible."

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Spanish American Union, Inc.

MASSACHUSETTS EMERGING LEADERS SITE

In responding to *Taking the Lead*'s Emerging Leaders Request for Proposals, this site brought together two informal support groups that perceived themselves as very separate. As the site engaged them, the groups realized they should come together. Collectively, they decided to start an independent association that could represent Latino family child care providers. The seeds that the Spanish American Union planted in bringing the groups together grew into a cooperative energy that ran throughout the program. A participatory model was vitally important to this site because it came from a framework of looking at the world in circular terms and not in linear terms. Program leaders and participants felt that working as a community, being inclusive, and acting as both teachers and learners were real cultural norms. SAU Executive Director Maria Morales-Loebl observed, "Everybody brought resources and contributed. There were no experts in the process. Our work was to cultivate the idea that we must share the leadership and the responsibility to make things happen."

The Registry

WISCONSIN DIRECTOR CREDENTIAL SITE

Participants in this director credential program tightly bonded as they underwent training. Courses emphasized group work and learning the skills of successful group work. The resulting atmosphere of sharing and trust outlived the program's end. The Registry, recognizing how important it was to sustain these relationships, created a support group – IMPACT – composed of credential graduates and participants. Site Director Jere Wallden related, "From the beginning, participants formed informal networks, calling each other outside of courses and visiting each other's centers. We tried to foster these networks by bringing graduates and participants together for continued training, networking, and socializing, and providing opportunities for directors to offer input that would help guide changes and improvements to the credential itself."

Conclusion

NEXT STEPS

We present the observations, examples, and suggestions in this publication as part of an ongoing, evolving Initiative. We offer interpretations of real experiences, rather than the results of formal research. Our intent is to share useful information on leadership development gleaned from all of the work of *Taking the Lead* thus far.

A successful leadership development program must be structured on its own set of community partnerships, cultural and community context, relevant content, mentoring relationships, and opportunities to exercise leadership. Because each situation is unique, our goal is not to present a formal curriculum for leadership development. Instead, we offer guidelines for creating your own leadership development programs and opportunities that truly meet the needs of all of the members of the field.

As we move forward into the 21st century, we will continue to work to accomplish our goals by disseminating our lessons through publications such as this, videos, conference presentations, and the National Community College Teaching and Leadership Institute. In the years ahead, we will continue to intensify our focus on higher education by expanding the institute offerings beyond community colleges to increase the ranks of trainers who understand, and are prepared to train others to address, the diversity of the current early childhood student population. And, we will work to meet the demand for information and technical assistance on developing director credentials by establishing a "hub" of resources, materials, and consultant expertise on the topic.

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Ultimately, we believe that there can be no blueprints for change, because rational planning models for complex social change do not work. Instead, change is a guided journey. The message is not the traditional, "Plan then do" but "Do, then plan, and do and plan some more."[6]

"I want to hold onto this opportunity and squeeze it so that I never lose it. In this year we have changed so much. For the first time, I feel free. I feel confident. I feel secure. I'm right on top of my career."

—Flora Rivera, family child care provider and Massachusetts *Taking the Lead* site participant

"When I think about what this project is doing, I keep seeing the image of a tree. We have enriched the soil, planted a seed, and made sure that we had roots growing deep within the ground. Many things can grow from these roots. But we won't know what these are until the tree has sprouted, the branches have reached outward, and the buds have blossomed."

—Deborah Hampton, Executive Director, ECCN

"Transformations in the social order often begin with an act of imagination that elevates a startling dream of change above the intimidating presence of things as they are. . . . Yet if [such dreams] are passionate and clear, and if they can call a great many people into their service, they may ultimately give shape to the future."

—Valora Washington, Executive Director, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, former Program Officer of W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and former member and co-founder of the ECEC

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Glossary of Terms

Throughout this publication, we use the following definitions to describe core concepts, organizations, and terminology:

Access: Equitable entry onto leadership development paths regardless of an individual's ability to pay, ethnicity, primary language, geographic location, current position in the field, skill level, professional connections, or familiarity with the higher education system.

Accreditation: A formal, voluntary system established by private groups or professional associations (such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Association for Family Child Care, and the National School-Age Care Alliance) that awards recognition to early care and education programs meeting specific criteria and standards believed to reflect high-quality practices.

Barriers: Obstacles that impede efforts to engage and sustain involvement in leadership development activities. These might include lack of opportunities to gain basic skills or attain literacy; lack of available education or training in one's native language; instructors whose teaching methods contradict one's value systems and/or communication styles; training schedules that interfere with family or work responsibilities; lack of geographically accessible training; and lack of continuity between leadership training and opportunities to assume leadership roles or recognized early care and education positions.

Cohort group: A body of students who undergo training together and form tight bonds that support their success.

Community partnerships: Formal and informal connections or collaborations between groups that represent the needs and interests of members of a geographic, ethnic, religious, linguistic, or professional community. Such partnerships help root and sustain the work of leadership development programs and generate opportunities to exercise leadership for participants.

Content: Information, knowledge, and skills that leaders need to possess to be effective in the 21st century.

Cultural/community context: History, values, traditions, expectations, economic realities, and ideals that shape participants' perspectives and actions. People define and value leadership in many ways. Effective leadership programs are designed to expect, accept, validate, and address these differences.

Cultural competency: Understanding, knowledge, experience, and practices consistent with those considered appropriate by a particular cultural group.

Culturally relevant: An approach to training, program design, and/or the development of early care and education systems that respects, incorporates, and supports differences in values, approaches, learning styles, and perspectives of those shaped by varying backgrounds. Using a culturally relevant approach allows individuals to derive greater participation and meaning from educational opportunities and professional experiences, and can lead to early care and education systems that better reflect the diversity of the populations we serve.

Culture-specific: Reflects the norms, expectations, customs, language, and values of a particular culture.

Director: Represents a variety of titles used by early childhood and school-age programs to describe the person ultimately in charge of an early care and education organization, including but not limited to program director, site supervisor, manager, executive director, or administrator.

Director credential: The awarding of a certificate, permit, or other document that certifies that an individual has mastered a specific set of defined skills and knowledge, and has demonstrated competencies to prepare for performance as a director in any early care and education setting (e.g., Head Start, private not-for-profit programs, for-profit programs, public and private schools). The body that awards the credential may or may not be the same organization that delivers the training. A credential may be awarded by a professional organization, state agency, higher education consortium, etc., and signifies a consensus by those groups of the validity of the standards set forth.

Early care and education: All types of education and care for children from birth through age 5, as well as programs for school-age children before and after-school and during vacations. *Child care*, *early childhood*, and *early care and education* are used interchangeably in this publication.

Early Childhood Funders Collaborative (ECFC): This organization represents 17 regional and national private funders who united in an effort to improve the quality of early care and education in our country. The ECFC initiated *Taking the Lead* in 1996 and fully funded the Initiative from 1996 to 1999.

Emerging leaders: Individuals in all roles and at varying skill levels who have the desire to assume leadership roles within their programs, communities, or broader arenas within the field. These individuals often have not fully utilized or had access to opportunities, education, personal experience and support, and/or professional resources that could enable them to assume these roles.

Existing leaders: Individuals who already serve in recognized leadership roles and who may need access to opportunities, education, personal experience and support, or professional resources that could enable them to expand their leadership capabilities.

Family child care:. Child care that is legally provided by an unrelated adult in the provider's home. In many states, family child care may be either *small family child care* – a single provider caring for children – or *large family child care*, sometimes called "group homes," which feature two providers (or one provider and an assistant) working together to care for children in one of their homes.

High quality and quality (early care and education): Safe, nurturing care that supports young children's sound physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development.

Infrastructure: The institutions, recognition systems, regulations, guiding principles, networks, resources, and defined pathways that are in place to comprise the field's professional or leadership development systems. A structure that may welcome, support, and aid in the progression of emerging and existing leaders or thwart their efforts.

Leadership: Exercising the skills, attitudes, experiences, understanding, and knowledge necessary to guide and/or work in unison with others to achieve a common goal or agenda.

Leadership Circles: A peer networking model developed by Carter McNamara of the Twin Cities area of Minnesota. The process involves the gathering of five to seven peers for a period of two to three hours. During this time, circle participants are allowed turns to "present" their goals and receive highly focused feedback, questions, and links to resources – rather than specific advice – from fellow circle peers.

Letter of Intent: Brief statement of a site's goals, collaborative partners, anticipated outcomes, and fit with the Initiative's objectives. All groups interested in becoming sites were required to submit Letters of Intent prior to being invited to submit proposals.

Mentoring: Coaching and supporting that promotes growth and learning. Approaches include one-on-one mentor-to-protégé, one mentor with a group of proteges, peer mentoring, use of mentors from outside the field, and multitiered mentoring.

Opportunities to exercise leadership: Involvement in substantive, "real life" independent or group project work that allows participants to move theory into practice and try out, refine, and expand their newly acquired knowledge and skills.

Paths to leadership development: Multiple routes that individuals may take to become leaders. These may include, for example, courses, life experience, supervised field placements/apprenticeships, and different professional experiences in a variety of roles. There is no "one right" sequence, approach, or route. Rather, people will choose various paths based on their unique circumstances, needs, and goals.

Practitioner, early childhood professional, provider, teacher: Often used interchangeably, to describe early care and education professionals who work directly with young children in a variety of teaching roles and settings.

The Registry: The Registry, a non-profit organization based in Madison, Wisconsin, tracks and organizes the training accomplishments of early childhood professionals. It also issues the certificates and transcripts that validate training and reviews practitioners' qualifications to meet state licensing.

Relevant content: Information, knowledge, and skills that prepare leaders to be effective advocates for quality child care. Relevant content responds to different population's definitions of leadership and includes information and support that prepare participants to succeed in leadership programs.

Sites: Initiatives across the country that were selected and funded by *Taking the Lead* to pilot innovative approaches to leadership development or the development of a director's credential. The geographic focus of the sites ranges from a single community to an entire state to multiple locations across the country.

Steering committees: Groups of collaborators that oversaw the work of each site.

Systems thinking: A way of looking at the field in terms of spheres of influence and the interconnection between the actions and reactions of major institutions, agencies, grassroots-level programs, and community groups.

Taking the Lead: Investing in Early Childhood Leadership for the 21st Century: A national leadership development initiative founded on the belief that creating a diverse cadre of early childhood leaders is the key to achieving high-quality programs for all children. *Taking the Lead* hopes to challenge, expand, and refine the field's definition of leaders and leadership. Building on the work of 10 sites across the country, *Taking the Lead* aims to expand our knowledge of effective and culturally relevant training practices, and strengthen the field's approach to recruiting and preparing leaders who can represent the needs of all children and achieve lasting and meaningful change in our nation's system of care.

Underrepresented groups: As defined for the purposes of *Taking the Lead* only, people of color, individuals of low income, those in lower-status roles, and linguistic minorities – groups that are not equitably represented in the ranks of early care and education leaders.

Other *Taking the Lead* publications:

Booklets/Resources:

The Power of Mentoring

'Authentic Leadership': [illegible] Journey from Inclusion to Equity

Director Credential Action Pack

Videos:

Leaders In the Making: New Pathways [illegible]

The Case for Director Credentialing [illegible]

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